



Language Learning Strategies (LLS) Used by Malaysian, Pakistani, and Italian ESL Learners: Comparing to Indonesian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with a review of the problematic approach in selecting Language Learning Strategies (LLS) due to the misleading the characteristics of English. Along with the purpose, this paper seeks to compare the differences between cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Indonesian EFL with Malaysian, Pakistani, and Italian ESL students' Language Learning Strategy. In addition, this review also aims to know the Language Learning Strategy used by other ESL countries and to become the main purchase of this study to evaluate Indonesian' Language Learning Strategy. In Indonesia, English becomes a foreign language where it is not an official language and has limited language input. Whereas, as we already know, English is a common subject learning for most people in Indonesia. This is due to the high interest and need for mastering English in various aspects. In learning English as a target language, people not only need to master their knowledge, but also the need for better and useful communicative competence in use. However, the need to come up with some appropriate teaching strategies becomes an important factor to achieve their goals.

Keywords: English Language Learning, TEFL, and Language Learning Strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

English has been recognized as an international language of communication. Not surprisingly, English is considered by donor agencies

as the de facto language for developing countries. Frequently a lot of money was spent by nations and the government on improving their English skill, particularly in the field of education. The goal is to

enhance the effectiveness of teaching – and therefore the overall quality of education – in non-native contexts of English speakers (Saputra & Hadi, 2019).

Each country has different ways and cultures of learning English as a compulsory language in the international field. For instance, Indonesia placed English as a foreign language, while another country such as Malaysia, Italy, and Pakistan placed English as a second language. The differences of English with Bahasa Indonesia of course influence the differences in terms of phonology, morphology, and syntax. In terms of pronunciation and orthography, for instance, English speech sounds do not correspond to graphical signs, this case unlike *Bahasa Indonesia* and its sister languages in the Austronesian language family. However, as vice versa, English is not more difficult than *Bahasa Indonesia* and English is the most difficult language of all languages. All ordinary people can acquire all human languages, including English.

Concerning the fact that language does not seem to be more difficult to learn and that all human beings can acquire any language, Jacobs in Panggabean(2015)points out that normal infants are born with full equipment to learn whatever human language is spoken anywhere in the world. In addition, all normal children pass the same stages of language learning, with no language that seems to be more difficult to learn than others. There was no significant difference between acquisition and learning. As mentioned by Lou (2014), both acquisition and learning have no significant differences as they can be used interchangeably. The

term English learning or acquisition of a second language acquisition, in general, is about the process of individuals and groups to learn that language (Troike as cited in Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012).

In learning a second or foreign language, learners need to develop some strategies to achieve their goals that can be considered as the Language Learning Strategies (LLS). Since the mid-1970s, numerous studies have been conducted LLS as they have been widely recognized as a key element in several language-learning models. Research in LLS has attracted researchers worldwide as it is one of the key factors in second language acquisition (Green & Oxford, 1995). it means that students are aware of some of the activities or habits they choose as their language strategies.

Similarly, Chamot (2004) defined LLS as the thinking and action taken by learners to achieve their learning goals. Therefore, the definition implies that students consciously choose a particular strategy and then make some effort to achieve their learning goals. Furthermore, Oxford in Ajeng (2017) stated that LLS is the right effort made by the students to create a less challenging, fun, and more adaptable learning environment. She divided learning strategies into two broad categories, direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are particular efforts made by students including the use of language, while indirect strategies are strategies that support language learning without using direct language (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989).

Learning strategies from countries where English is as a second language are certainly different from

countries where English is placed as a foreign language. For some English Second Language (ESL) students or from countries that do not use English as their first language, it is important to be informed about how English is learned and what strategies might be appropriate or applicable to some students. LLS is seen as a shift away from focusing on teachers and teaching learners on learning. Cohen in Akbar, Gul, Sial, Nadeem, & Ranjha (2013) defined LLS is one potentially beneficial shift of teachers' roles in being exclusive such the manager, controller, and instructor to that of being a change agent facilitator of learning, whose role is to help their students to become more independent and more responsible for their learning. In this role, the teacher becomes a partner in the learning process.

Many different LLS can be used by language learners, including metacognitive techniques that encourage and focus on one's emotions or attitudes; social strategies for working with others in the learning process; cognitive strategies that link new information with existing schemes and to analyse and classify them; memory strategies that enter new information into memory storage and retrieve them as needed; and compensation strategies (such as guessing or using gestures) to overcome deficiencies and gaps in one's current language knowledge (Oxford as cited in Odabaşı & Šafranĵ, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this paper, we will see how the strategies differ from ESL and EFL countries in English language learning. This review also will be

concerned about the LSS based on ethnicity, language learning materials, task characteristics, and other factors. A literature review and analysis were conducted with covering journal publications that focus on LLS used in Indonesian EFL with Malaysian, Pakistani, Italian ESL students that have not been sufficiently carried out in recent years and this study aims to fill in that gap.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Background

LAlthough classified as Asian countries, Malaysia and Pakistan certainly have many differences in their English LSS; however, they make this one international language as their second language.

Malaysian ESL Students

Malaysian learners begin to place the English as their school subject at the seven years old when they begin their education on the primary level. This English subject is continued for six years at the primary school level and five more years in the secondary school level. Throughout primary and secondary education, Malaysian learners sit for three national-based assessments: one at the end of primary school, another at the end of lower secondary school and the last at the end of upper secondary school. The latter group of learners who sit the Malaysian Certificate of Examination (SPM) are required to pass the English language paper, besides four other subjects, which was a very important subject before pursuing higher education. A few English courses are still made compulsory for learners in

undergraduate programs to enrol in and pass before they graduate, depending on their skill level upon entry. The skill level is determined by the English examination administered by the Malaysian Education Council known as the Malaysian University Entrance Test (MUET) as a means of objectively assessing Malaysian learners. The test is compulsory and must be taken by pre-university learners at the end of the programs before they commence their undergraduate programs at any Malaysian state universities. The test assesses four components namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

According to Stapa & Majid(2006), the use of *Bahasa Malaysia* in teaching writing promotes better writing literacy among English learners' skills. Using experimental study, their research reinforces that the use of *Bahasa Malaysia* in generating ideas in English language learners' essays effectively helps students to produce better essays quality in overall score, of content, language, and organization. Ali (2008) reported that teachers in their case study primarily use *Bahasa Malaysia* to teach English because of the pressure to get good grades in examinations.

Pakistani ESL Students

In Pakistan, the English and Urdu languages are used in the government sector, corporate area, media, training, and education and so on. The country supports these two dialects with the responsibility of others. This country has brought the articulation of ethnic character through other dialects than Urdu. This country has introduced English as a symbol of high society,

modernity, and power. The less effective Pakistani dialects become an easier sign of social status and humiliation. Some dialects tend to be extinct. It is only with the added substance that multilingualism and Pakistani dialects will gain importance and grow as a social capital instead of social stigma.

English is one of the official languages of Urdu and it is taught as a single compulsory language subject in school. English becomes the more powerful language at the university level as it is a compulsory subject at the undergraduate level. Moreover, it is the only medium of instruction at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. All science, humanities, and social sciences degrees are granted after the learners pass the English language examination.

Italian ESL Students

In some European countries in Italy, students will begin to learn English since primary school, and the lessons are about English grammar frequently until their secondary school begins. During this time, the number of learning hours of English language courses in the school per week is quite the same in each school. Otherwise, in high school, students may choose more options for their subjects, if you choose the language studies lessons, you'll improve your English language by at least 5 hours a week, instead of 3 or 4 at another institution. However, to the extent that university and high school that it's cultural aspects are in linguistic, there are some subjects taught more specifically for a second language like English.

Many of the students find it difficult to express and speak and the fact that all English-language programs are dubbed on Italian and that does not give them a possibility of “additional lessons” in English. To improve English today, every kind of secondary school and high school must provide a few hours taught by a native language teacher, to help students especially in pronunciation. Also many teachers get support from online websites where they can find English movies with subtitles or other online instruments.

English has been selected as the second language in Italy and it is considered very important for learning since childhood, but they still find it difficult to provide a complete and advanced education. Most advanced schools now provide good teaching and in every university, are required to have at least one English exam and other assignments that they will give to learn English better.

Indonesian EFL Students

Indonesia has been considered to choose English as the first foreign language. It functions to foster the state and nations’ development, build relations with other nations, and carry out foreign policy including as language used for wider communication in international forums. Concerning that Indonesia has implemented EFL teaching in almost of school levels, from primary school to secondary school. The researchers will take an example of a case study of English education in students’ university in Indonesia. The university students, who take English education as the majority reported, that most universities

in Indonesia use dissimilar learning strategies frequently.

Language Learning Strategies (LLS) choice

Based on the research finding, it can be explained that those selected countries use all six LLS simultaneously. However, the most frequent LLS used is metacognitive strategy. Thus, they can determine what learning plan they are going to do and evaluate the use of certain strategies for better achievement. These findings are in line with the previous research findings in which students use of a metacognitive strategy to provide regular preparation, control, and assessment for their language learning stages (Zare, 2012). On the contrary, O’Malley & Chamot(1990) report that Asian students’ learning strategy including Indonesian EFL students cannot be fully accepted memory strategy because of a part of the Asian context, rather than metacognitive strategy.

Akbar et al (2013) compared the learning strategies used by Pakistani students in the formal and non-formal education systems and found that formal students use strategies of memorization and socialization while non-formal students use summarizing and compensatory strategies. Studies show that factors such as age, motivation, goals, aptitude, language learning level, skill, learning style, and learning field influence LLS choice. Factors such as learning stage, age, learning style, context, experience, culture, and teaching also impact the strategy uses (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). The next preferred LLS used by the participants is a social

strategy. Related to their educational level, the social strategy is very common because they have to periodically communicate and cooperate very during the teaching-learning process, inside or outside the classroom. For this kind of strategy, students purposely engage in more interaction with others so that they can improve their English skills to enrich their vocabulary (Alhaysony, 2012). In short, the social strategy is considered as one of the English LLS. Moreover, Most of the students' universities think that through practicing their language skills with others, their language skills can be continuously improved.

Another strategy used by the participants in the compensation strategy. They utilize this strategy because it allows them to guess the meaning of texts they are reading about or dialogues they are having with, make use of gestures to help them deliver the message to their partners in conversation, or make up new words if they do not know the correct words to utter. The previous explanation directly refers to Aunurrahman, Kurniawati, & Ramadhiyanti's (2013) research result that compensation strategy is one of the frequent strategies used by college students.

As shown earlier in findings, it can be stated that students use a combination of indirect and direct learning strategies namely metacognitive, social, and compensation strategies. Thus, it conforms to Oxford & Nyikos's (1989) report that indirect and direct strategies are interrelated with each other since students generally combine them in the process of learning the language. Therefore, this is consistent with Oxford

& Nyikos's (1989) report that strategies are not directly and directly related to one another as students generally incorporate them into the language learning process.

The attitudes towards the second and foreign language can affect the process of learning. The attitude of the students is fundamental, but also the support of the home, the opinions of peers, the attitude at school and even in the community can be important. One's attitude toward something is based on experience. Feelings, thoughts and opinions about an object, etc., are defined as attitudes. Attitudes can be positive, negative or neutral. Krashen (1988) concerns the connection between attitude and motivation. Krashen argues that some variables play a significant, though not exclusive role in second language acquisition. He found that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, and low levels of anxiety about the target language have better conditions to learn a second language. On the other hand, if the motivation and self-confidence are low and the learner is more anxious, it will aggravate the process when effective filters are raised and create an obstacle to learn. The role of motivation in some learning strategies is paralleled with the role of anxiety and self-confidence (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010).

Spolsky in Norton (2000) for instance, has argued that "there is a specific kind of anxiety interferes with second language learning for many learners. He argues that this anxiety mostly concerns listening and speaking skills". In countries where English is used as a second language such as Malaysia,

Pakistan, and Italy, people can communicate in English even if they learn the language without learning grammar. Unlike Indonesian who learns English informal instruction using a strict grammar approach, they learn the languages just the way they learn their mother tongues. For Indonesian, to be able to communicate in English like Malaysians, Pakistani and Italians, they should learn English as the way that three countries do. Unfortunately, the Indonesian learning atmosphere is different from that in Malaysia, Pakistan and Italy.

The possible reasons why Malaysians, Pakistani and Italian can learn English naturally is because of situation that encourages them to use English, such as government policy to establish English as a second language, a large number of English-speaking tourists visit these countries, education requirement, internet based communication, and commercial transactions.

In Indonesia, English is not a second language rather a foreign language and its use is not as important as it is in Malaysia, Pakistan and Italy. With this in mind, English must be formally declared as a second language in Indonesia and more English-speaking people visit the country. It should be noted that Malaysians and Indonesians have the same capacity in acquiring English as the national languages of both people are sister languages, descendants of Proto-Malay Polynesian. What made their acquisition processes different was the atmosphere and how English is taught and learned.

CONCLUSION

Learning strategies in each country is different but the majority of them recognize that there is an important role in their lives in learning English. How Malaysia implement a system of English LLS was also mixed with their first Malay language did. Similarly, Pakistan also applies an English-based examination system for its citizens to measure their English language skills. Italy also has a different strategy. They apply an optional class at the high school level for those who have an interest in language and want to sharpen it even more and not in a state of coercion for their students.

The learners to shape their conversations use language as a tool; instead, side-by-side, they negotiate their sense of who they are and how they view their relationships with the world. Various LLS in ESL learning should be applied to find the most suitable one related to the learner's needs. Whereas in the EFL case, it is very much needed a strategy that supports the willingness and facilities that create better LLS (Norton, 2000).

Being confident and motivated is also important to support the process. The frequency of practicing is supported by the investment of money and time to learn the language as the last strategy to make. The more students practice the language, the better English he may achieve. The power of social identity and language investment is merely like a chance for the learners to gain more confidence and motivation in their target language. It is common to find the language learner feel inferior to native speakers or someone whose language

ability is much better than him. Therefore, good LLS for learning English is to introduce the foreign language in advance so that the student can love and be motivated to learn it without force.

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